

# Santee National Wildlife Refuge

## *Important Facts*

- Managed as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System which is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of Interior.
- Established in 1941 to alleviate the loss of natural waterfowl, migratory bird, and wildlife habitat caused by the construction of hydroelectric projects on the Santee and Cooper Rivers.
- Historically over 73,000 acres, the refuge now provides protection over 15,095 acres of mixed hardwoods, pine-hardwoods, pine plantations, marsh, croplands, old fields, ponds, impoundments and open waters. Of the total area, the refuge owns approximately 4,400 acres fee title.
- Diversity of habitats support a myriad of wildlife species including 296 bird species recorded on the refuge. Birds of note include bald eagle, wood storks, osprey, great blue heron, American and snowy egrets, green herons, gallinules, coots, anhingas, mallards, wood ducks, Canada geese, pintail, bobwhite quail, wild turkey, and numerous songbirds (painted bunting, prothonotary warbler, wood thrush, and more). The refuge serves as the southern extent of the migratory range of the Southern James Bay Canada goose population.



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### Management Activities

- Plantings to provide supplemental food for ducks and geese
- Manipulating water levels for optimum habitat for water birds, ducks and geese
- Managing forests and wetlands
- Managing wildlife populations through controlled hunting
- Providing environmental education and interpretive programs
- Working with volunteers and the newly established "Friends of Santee Refuge"

### Descriptive Information

Santee Refuge includes 4 units (Bluff, Dingle Pond, Pine Island and Cuddo). The Bluff unit is located near the Visitor Center and is home to the Santee Indian Mound (dating back 3,500 years) and of Fort Watson, a Revolutionary War battle site. Visitors may also use the one mile Wrights Bluff Nature Trail to get a closer look at wildlife. They may also walk or bike the dirt roads on this unit (except during waterfowl season). Several impoundments and a view of Cantey Bay from the nature trail give good observation vantage points on the Bluff Unit.

Dingle Pond is home to a Carolina Bay and provides unique habitat for several wetland species including alligators, wood ducks, mallards, ring-necked ducks, several waterbirds including breeding anhingas, and a good diversity of

songbirds. Visitors may park at a gate and walk a one mile trail (one-way).

Pine Island and the Cuddo Unit probably provide the greatest diversity of habitats (and thus species) of the four units. Pine Island is open only to foot and bicycle traffic, but the Cuddo Unit offers a wildlife drive which provides many great wildlife observation opportunities. Two foot trails and numerous woods roads are open for foot traffic and bicycles. An automatic gate for the Cuddo unit opens at 7 am and closes at 7 pm from April through September. The area is open from 8 am til 5 pm from October through March.

### Refuge Staff

Currently seven people on staff:

- Refuge Manager (Marc Epstein)
- Biologist
- Lead Park Ranger
- Park Ranger - Law Enforcement
- Office Assistant
- Engineering Equipment Operator
- Engineering Equipment Operator



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### Volunteers

Volunteers are very important to refuge operations. A number of refuge volunteers have been enrolled and routinely volunteer their time to assist with such projects as wood duck and mallard banding, checking and maintaining wood duck nest boxes,



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- Other wildlife of interest include American alligator, bobcat, white-tailed deer, and a number of reptiles and amphibian species.

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building bluebird and wood duck boxes, maintaining the Santee Indian Mound, providing clerical assistance, helping with maintenance projects, planting trees, maintaining trails, and more.

### Friends of Santee Refuge

This group was established in 2002 and supports the refuge in a number of ways including:

- support of volunteer projects and programs
- marketing the Refuge to the community and beyond
- if needed, lobbying Congress for needed funding and/or staffing



- serving as a spokesperson for the Refuge in the event of threats to management activities and programs
- raising monies to fund refuge programs and projects (via campaigns or sales outlets)

### Vision/Plans for the Future

- Restore, enhance and maintain habitat for wintering waterfowl and Southern James Bay Canada goose populations
- Maintain and enhance upland forest and shrub habitats for migratory and breeding song birds
- Provide and enhance habitat conditions for any threatened or endangered species, and for species of special management concern
- Enhance and increase community awareness and appreciation for the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System



- Improve visitor service facilities (visitor center, exhibits, walking trails, improve and add interpretive exhibits to all four units)
- Increase visibility of the Refuge and the Refuge System through media releases and other marketing techniques
- Increase use of the Refuge by area schools for outdoor classrooms and environmental education programs
- Increase and improve volunteer programs
- When appropriate, add visitor use opportunities such as photography workshops, nature walks, canoe/kayak trails, special events

### National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial

March 14, 2003 marked 100 years since President Theodore Roosevelt established what would become the world's largest system of fish and wildlife conservation lands — the National Wildlife Refuge System. Santee National Wildlife Refuge is one of 545 refuges that make up our nation's only system of federal lands dedicated to wildlife protection.



The refuge system turned 100 in 2003, and yet a majority of people in the United States don't know about the refuge system, even though there is at least one refuge in every state. This system represents America's commitment to protect wild places.

The first national wildlife refuge was founded by President Roosevelt on March 14, 1903 at Pelican Island, a five-acre island along the east coast of Florida. Roosevelt was concerned about the decline of many species of birds and other wildlife resulting from poaching.

From that original five-acre refuge, the system has grown to encompass almost 95 million acres, including some of our nation's most unique, spectacular, and truly wild places.

While national wildlife refuges focus on fish and wildlife protection first, they also offer numerous outdoor opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, bird watching, photography, and environmental education. Today, more than 35 million Americans visit and enjoy national wildlife refuges each year.

The State of South Carolina is indeed fortunate to have eight National Wildlife Refuges within its borders (Savannah, Pinckney Island, Tybee, ACE Basin, Cape Romain, Waccamaw, Santee, and Carolina Sandhills). These marvelous national treasures encompass more than 185,000 acres and provide habitat and protection for more than ten different species of endangered wildlife within their boundaries. Contact your favorite refuge for details about their public use opportunities.



*The Blue Goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*